

NUTRITION IN THE NEWS

Nearly every day, research findings related to nutrition and health make the news. What should you do when today's report seems to contradict what you heard last week?

Your best bet is to use caution and common sense.



CURRENT TOPICS ON
FACTS
NUTRITION AND HEALTH

Use these tips for judging reports of food and nutrition research findings:



Refrain from making changes in your food choices based on results from a single research study. The results of one study are just one piece of a bigger puzzle. Wait until more studies can confirm the results.



Be wary of recommendations that promise a quick fix. Claims that sound too good to be true are usually just that.



Remember to go beyond the headlines. Attention-grabbing headlines often oversimplify more complex findings. Bottom-line conclusions are usually reported at the end of a news story.



Learn about the study methods. Longer studies, with more people, are more likely to produce valid results. But be aware that the study results may not apply to you if the people studied are different in age, gender, health or lifestyle.



Check out the sources. Credible research is conducted by a respectable scientific or medical organization and is reported by a reputable newspaper, newsletter, magazine or scientific journal.



Look for expert interpretation. Reports of research findings often include review and advice from nutrition and health professionals, such as a registered dietitian.

ADVICE FOR TODAY

Take the time to be well-informed about diet and health. But use healthy skepticism when evaluating nutrition research findings. Until research findings are confirmed and consensus is reached, stick with the "tried and true" when it comes to diet and health recommendations.

■ Be Realistic.

Set reasonable goals and make small changes over time — ones that you can stick with. Use the Food Guide Pyramid as your guide for choosing a variety of foods in healthy proportions.

■ Be Flexible.

Balance your food choices over time. For example, savor your steak or pasta twice as much; eat half in the restaurant and take the rest home for tomorrow.

■ Be Sensible.

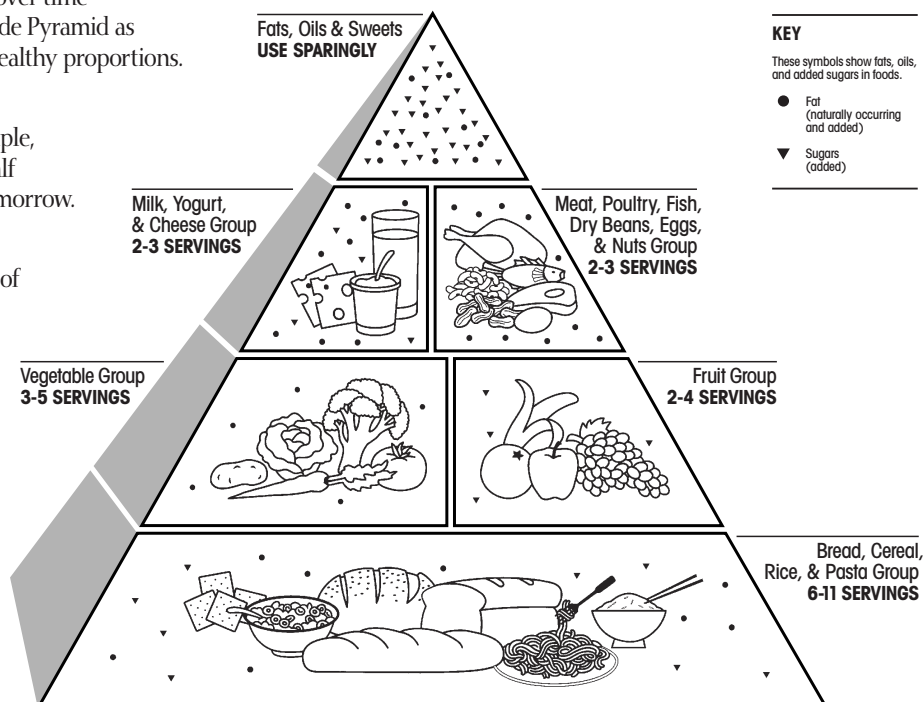
Enjoy all foods, just don't overdo it. Steer clear of eating plans with rigid menus that limit your selection of foods or food groups.

■ Be Adventurous.

Expose your taste buds to new flavors. Start by trying some foods you've never tasted — for example, fruits like mango, kumquat or pomegranate, or vegetables like jicama, arugula or kohlrabi.

■ Be Active.

For overall fitness and health, include physical activity in your daily routine. The benefits are many — weight control, stress relief, muscle toning, increased energy and feeling great!



Source: U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE and the U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES.